Last year, I was hired as the Media Lab’s assistant director of diversity. It has been a pleasure to be part of the Media Lab and MAS team. Together we have worked to attract great people to the Lab, including those who may not have considered this place a possibility before. We have looked at the student experience and brainstormed how to make it better. Take a look at all that MAS Diversity & Inclusion has accomplished this year and know that you were a significant part of that effort.

In the coming year, we will work to further increase the support and services we offer MAS students. The health and well being of our community is a group responsibility and I look forward to another year of growing together.

Monica Orta
Assistant Director, Diversity & Student Support
The Diversity Committee is comprised of students, faculty, and staff who are committed to increasing the racial, ethnic, and gender diversity of the MAS Program. It serves as a sounding board and collaborative thinking partner to the Assistant Director; works to develop a strong applicant pool; and helps to coordinate activities that showcase academics, research, and student life to prospective students. This year the Diversity Committee’s efforts led to a:

- Preliminary review of all minority applicants (thanks Ethan Zuckerman and Mike Bove!)
- Faculty admissions meeting to discuss applicants across research groups
- Brainstorm around improving the MAS program website for both current and prospective students
- Discussion about increasing the integration of UROPs into the Lab
Recruitment Efforts

MAS Open House
In order to increase the reach of the MAS Open House, we partnered with the University of Maryland, Baltimore County to bring an additional 12 prospective students from underrepresented backgrounds to the Lab.

SOS (Students Offering Support) Program
In Fall 2014, we launched the SOS Program, which pairs applicants from underrepresented groups with current MAS students, who offer guidance in creating a stronger application through feedback on the statement of purpose or portfolio.

MIT Summer Research Program (MSRP)
MSRP is a 9 week research program, sponsored by the Office of the Dean for Graduate Education. Similar to a UROP, MSRP interns work on a project throughout the summer, while learning about how to apply and get into graduate school. MSRP has been a successful pipeline across MIT, and we are working to expand the number of interns placed in the Lab.

The Stats!
• 29 prospective students participated
• 16 applied
• 19% were accepted!

Then...
Last year we had 4 MSRP interns at the Lab.

...Now!
We have 6 interns across 4 different research groups.
Recruitment Successes

Admissions
This Fall, MAS welcomed 47 new masters and 12 new PhD students. Through targeted efforts, we have increased the admission rate for underrepresented minorities; increased the yield of admitted women students; and we will thereby have one of our most diverse incoming cohorts.

The admission rate for URM students has been consistently lower than the 7% average for all other groups. This year, it increased to 13%.

Similarly, yield for women has been consistently lower than that of men. This year, it exceeds the yield for men.

Masters Cohort Comparison

There is a 5% increase in women students between the aggregated 2011-2014 cohorts and our 2015 cohort.

There is a 12% increase in URM students between the aggregated 2011-2014 cohorts and our 2015 cohort.
Women’s Lunch Series
Once a month, the women of the Lab get together for lunch to connect, build community, and develop professional and personal skills. We’ve had a wonderful range of speakers this year.

• Power Imbalance & Conflict Resolution
  Libby Mahaffy, Assistant Director for Conflict Resolution, MIT

• Navigating Your Career
  MAS Women Faculty – Profs. Pattie Maes, Neri Oxman, and Roz Picard

• Stand Up and Talk! Public Speaking Tricks & Tips
  Keira Horowitz, MAS Program Assistant & Public Speaker

• Hidden Bias: What Keeps Us From Building True Meritocracies
  Jennifer Argüello, Senior Tech Advisor, Kapor Center for Social Impact

• Strategies for Fundraising
  Jennifer McCrea, Senior Research Fellow, Hauser Institute for Civil Society

• Leading Through the Unknown
  Susan Schuman, CEO SYPartners

• Crafting Your Professional & Leadership Brand
  Dr. Robbin Chapman, Associate Provost & Academic Director of Diversity, Wellesley College

“it’s provided a chance to see the perspectives and views of my female peers.”

“...always leave feeling reassured!”

“safe space to talk”

“Nice for building community.”
New initiatives to look forward to in 2015 – 2016!

- Open House Travel Grants
- MAS Ambassadors Program
- Virtual Lab visits
- Additional MAS Town Hall Meetings

Hispanic Heritage Month
In October, we hosted a screening of this film about undocumented Mexican immigrants who competed in a national robotics competition and defeated MIT.

Gillian Caldwell Women’s Coaching Session
In November, we partnered with the Director’s Fellows Program to bring Gillian Caldwell, social justice advocate and Fellow, to present to the women students. Gillian led a discussion about tactics she has found successful in approaching organizational fundraising, leadership, and strategic planning. She also addressed student questions, such as how to make your work your own and how to deal with tense situations in competitive environments.

STEMinist Mugs
In celebration of Women’s History Month, we recognized the women of MAS and the Media Lab with our Alumnae Through the Years cards, distributed to interested members of the ML community inside STEMinist mugs.

Student Climate Survey
In April, MAS Diversity Initiatives distributed a student climate survey to all MAS students and outside RAs. The purpose of this survey was to address broad questions about the MAS and Lab environments so as to better direct our plans and initiatives for the upcoming academic year.

We then held a town hall meeting for students to voice their thoughts on the survey results in a safe space. We will continue to hold these forums once a semester.

63% of students completed the survey

Women in Science: Garnering Visibility
Rachel Swaby, author of Headstrong, 52 Women Who Changed Science--and the World, led a conversation around the stories behind the women in her book. She was then joined by ML alumna, Dr. Marina Bers, in a discussion about being a woman in science.

Halloween Diversi-Tea
We sponsored the weekly Friday tea on Halloween with themed treats, finger puppets, and costumes!